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Dear Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center:

I understand that after two decades, Tech University Health Science Center (TTUHSC) has not purchased cats for research from Odessa, Texas Animal Control this year. I hope TTUHSC has joined over 90% of U.S. and Canadian facilities that use simulated models for medical training courses.

I am surprised that TTUHSC relies upon old-fashioned animal experiments in the first place. Please permanently replace animal labs with synthetic models like simulators and manikins.

Though human-focused tools yield data more relevant to people, TTUHSC courses have featured a drill in which students drive plastic tubes down cats' windpipes, causing them to bleed or swell. Constant intubation can scar throat tissue and lead to collapsed lungs or death.

Cats have also undergone a procedure that pumps air into their chest cavities. Trainees try to extract the surplus air via an inserted needle.

Animal-free learning methods cut overhead to confine, feed and destroy cats. A timely New England Journal of Medicine article highlights the "very detailed feedback and...more subtle measurement of trainee performance" gained from virtual reality simulators. The article concludes: Inanimate models are "safe, reproducible, readily available, and cost-effective."

Moreover, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Heart Association — the agencies that sponsor most pediatric life-support courses nationwide — don't promote animal use. They advocate synthetic models that give students an accurate depiction of human, not feline, anatomy.

Please let me know if TTUHSC has, in fact, replaced live cat use in medical training with superior and humane non-animal technologies.

Thank you,